

Blackstone Valley Corridor

at CCRI Lincoln Campus

June 16, 2003 from 6:30pm to 9:00pm

Approximately 10 residents participated in the workshop. The participants represented the cities and towns of: Lincoln, North Providence, Providence, Smithfield and Woonsocket. There was also a representative from the Pawtucket Foundation and the TAC.

Workshop Participants:

- 2 had lived in the corridor more than 25 years
- 1 had lived in the corridor for 20-25 years
- 2 had lived in the corridor for 10-20 years
- 5 had lived in the corridor less than 10 years

Corridor Municipalities

- | | |
|--------------------|--------------------|
| • Burrillville | • North Smithfield |
| • Central Falls | • Smithfield |
| • Cumberland | • Pawtucket |
| • Lincoln | • Providence |
| • North Providence | • Woonsocket |

Major Roads of the Corridor

- Route 146
- Route 146A
- Route 7
- Route 114
- Route 122
- * Blackstone Valley Bikeway
- * Route 99 was discussed as a connector that eases commuting but was not designated a corridor road

Other Transportation Modes in the Corridor

Bike

- The Blackstone Valley Bike Path is available for transportation and recreation.

Bus Service

- RIPTA bus routes are available, but limited in scope and schedule

Train

- There is freight rail access in the corridor
- MBTA service to Boston is available at Forge Park in Franklin, MA, but no Rhode Island buses serve the train station.

Using the Corridor Roads

Most workshop participants either worked in the corridor or commuted north into Massachusetts. The corridor is diverse, and the outer, rural areas of the corridor are extremely car dependent.

Access to Massachusetts is limited to automobile only. Even though there is MBTA access in close proximity, RIPTA does not cross over the border. Residents use Route I- 295, north and south, to access Providence, Boston and southern Rhode Island, via Routes I-95 and I-93. Route 99 takes traffic off of other roads and is a major connector from Route I-95 to North Cumberland and Woonsocket. Other parts of the corridor are more urban and provide better access to public transportation. Many participants wanted to bike to work, but were concerned about the inability to bike to and from work safely.

Positive Features of the Corridor

Blackstone River is the focus of the valley. “**A river runs through it**” was how one participant described the area; the Blackstone River is the **spine** of the corridor. The area has many natural and cultural amenities that are connected to the river. The historic mill villages that dot the rivers edge are an attraction along with the recreational opportunities that the river provides. The area offers a semi-rural setting with access to employment options. The small mill villages, including Manville, Lonsdale, Woonsocket Falls, Salyersville, Ashton, Berkeley and Albion create Main Streets and positive community settings. Breakneck Hill Road is a pleasant drive with good views. The corridor can be described as being an **urban wilderness** with bucolic sections and an easy commute to Providence.

- Historic treasure of road, mill villages and architecture
- Suburban areas with industry
- Mill villages have successful, mixed-income neighborhoods, mixed housing stock and large mill buildings available for adaptive reuse
- Easy commute to Providence, Boston, Worcester
- High quality of schools
- Higher Boston cost of housing attracts commuters to live north of Providence
- Natural beauty of towns, rivers and scenic roads
- Freight rail is an asset for State and supports businesses
- RIPTA Flex Service has been initiated

Issues with the Corridor

As much as residents enjoy the benefits of the corridor, they stated concerns about safety, deteriorating aesthetics, environmental impacts and increased growth in the area.

Traffic/Congestion/Access Management/Safety

- Diamond Hill Road has too many curb cuts
- Potential problem for over-development, curb cuts (for big and little boxes), and sprawl along undeveloped roads as population increases
- Lack of East/West routes
- Congestions at intersections
 - Routes 146, 116 and 295 intersection is heavily used
 - Route 146 - old U-Turns are dangerous
 - Acceleration and deceleration from Route 116 onto Route 146 needs review
 - The intersection of Route 295 and Route 122
 - The intersection of Route 295 and Route 114
 - The intersection of Route 295 and Route 7
- Pedestrian access limited

- Few sidewalks
- Lack of maintenance on roads and sidewalks
- Speeding and lack of enforcement

Land Use and Sprawl

- Growth induced by increased flow on Route 295 and Route 495
- Anticipated development of open space
- Large areas available for redevelopment and residential development
- Fear of over-commercialization of the corridor
- Land uses on Diamond Hill Road have too many curb cuts

Pedestrian Issues

- Lack of pedestrian facilities along roads and within villages
- Need for sidewalk along Smithfield Road in North Providence
- Lack of pedestrian access to major facilities, i.e. CCRI, malls and shopping
- No access from Woonsocket to MBTA station in Franklin, MA
- Woonsocket train station not connected to MBTA
- Providence and Worcester rail is an active freight line without passenger services
- Pawtucket and Central Falls want to rehab existing historic train station along commuter route from Providence to Boston

Environmental

- Damaging run-off into Blackstone River from increased development and traffic
- Access to Blackstone River is not open to most of public and is cut off by bad development
- Under-utilizing Blackstone River views and cultural significance

Transit

- No cross-state transit options
- No “walkable” access to transit stops
- Underserved areas in high density sections of corridor (Woonsocket)
- Gaps in public transportation service throughout the corridor

Issues Identified by Participants at End of Session

At the conclusion of the visioning session, participants were presented with a list of issues and asked to prioritize them. The following chart represents their priorities.

